



*The hope of a good man in the view of
DEATH, and the proper temper of
his mind with reference to it; considered,*

IN A
SERMON

Occasioned by the

**DEATH
OF**

Mrs. MARY MOTTERSLED.

Preach'd at *Ratcliff*, June 4. 1732.

By *JER. TIDCOMBE.*

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The House of Commons
has resolved that

the following

Bill be introduced

for the purpose of



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That

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J O B XIV. 14.

— *All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.*

IN the history of *Job* you see the bright, and the dark side of human life. The former part of his story shews *Man at his best estate*; in the possession of health and ease, of honour and riches; and, in one word, enjoying an abundance of the good things of this life, amidst a numerous offspring; and with the pleasing prospect of communicating happiness to them while he lived, and entailing it upon them after he was dead. Tho' the conjunction was not very common at that time, as it is not now; yet, in him, it seems goodness and greatness met together. His exemplary piety and virtue were honour'd by the distinguishing favours of providence. How-

ever, that he, who was become so remarkable for his prosperity in the world, might be made an example of the vanity of it too ; that his virtue, which had been proved in prosperous circumstances, might be tried by adversity also, and shine in the dark, and so redound to the greater honour of divine grace still ; and that mankind might have in him, a standing proof at once, of the uncertainty of all the enjoyments of this world, and of the solid support and comfort which religion is able to give in the absence (and even under the loss) of them ; you see the scene, all of a sudden, changed ; and the *greatest man in the East*, in one day, become the meanest and the most indigent. The *Sabeans* fall on his *oxen* and *asses*, the *Chaldeans* carry away his *camels* ; the *fire of God* consumes his *sheep*, and his hand cuts off his children too. And thus *God* and man seemed to have conspired together to promote his ruin. And his adversity came on with so quick a pace, *Providence* made such haste to impoverish him, that he had not time to hear out the sad story of one calamity that had befallen him, before the news of another reached his ears. The messengers of affliction trod on one another's heels, and so prevented those succours of reason and religion, which *Job* might have called in, had they come at such

such a distance, as to have left him room to recollect himself in the mean time. But this was not all. As if it had not been enough, that his whole estate was at once consumed, or taken from him, and all his children cut off together, and himself left behind to mourn over the ruins of his family, and his substance: as if the hand of *God* had not touched him near enough yet, behold his flesh, after all, covered with *sore boils*, at the same time that his mind was ready to sink under the weight of his troubles. And, to finish his calamity, and consummate his misery, while the hand of *God* lay so very heavy upon him, the tongues of men were set against him too: his former friends, who should, by their presence, and their pity, have administer'd some little ease under his burden, became another burden to him. Reproachful words, the wise man observes, *are as wounds, that go down into the innermost parts of the belly*^a. The hand of *God* touched his flesh, and his outward comforts; but the severe censures, which they passed upon him, seem to have touched him to the heart. Their reproaches were like so many *boils* within, that made his very soul smart. Such multiplied, aggravated sorrows as his, were enough to extort a complaint from a good man, and try the patience even of *patience itself*. And 'tis no wonder to hear some passionate expressions

^a Prov. xviii. 8.

of his misery, now and then, break out from a man of *Job's* character, in his condition. For tho' *Job* had the character, from *God* himself, of an *upright and perfect man*; yet still, he was but a *man*. And in his carriage under his afflictions, we see the man, as well as the saint; the weakness of his nature, as well as the strength of his grace. It seems his life was so imbit-ter'd to him, that he began, in good earnest, to be weary of it, and to wish he could get rid of it. And, in the bitterness of his soul, he went so far, as to curse the day of his birth, and call in haste for death. Let the day perish wherein I was born; and the night, in which it was said, there is a man-child conceived^b. My soul chuseth strangling and death, rather than life: I loath it, I would not live always; let me alone, for my days are vanity^c. And nothing would do, but he must needs have his choice. Thus he speaks to *God* in the verse preceding my text: O that thou would'st hide me in the grave, that thou would'st keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou would'st appoint me a set time, and remember me, i. e. " Tho' " 'tis the common lot of mankind to sleep " a long time in the grave, and men lie " down there, without any hope of awa- " king out of the sleep of death, or arising " out of their dusty beds, till that far-distant

^b Job iii. 3.^c Job vii. 15, 16.

“ day dawn, when the visible *heavens* shall
 “ pass away, and *be no more*, (v. 12.) yet I
 “ wish thou would’st indulge me with a
 “ shorter retreat there; and *awake* me
 “ sooner. Let the grave be my refuge from
 “ the evils that have overtaken me; do thou
 “ *hide* me there till thine *indignation be past*,
 “ and the storm blown over; and then re-
 “ store me back to life, and to the comforts
 “ of it together.” But he corrects himself
 in the next words, and comes to a better
 temper. *If a man die shall he live again?*
all the days, &c. i. e. “ But this, I know,
 “ is an unreasonable wish, and would be a
 “ vain hope; and therefore I call back my
 “ petition again: I am willing to *wait*
 “ till death come in the ordinary course of
 “ nature, and content to bear whatever thou
 “ shalt see fit to lay upon me in the mean
 “ time. Tho’ I durst not on second thoughts,
 “ call for death to release me out of my
 “ troubles, in expectation of being called
 “ back to this life again, and restored to
 “ my former prosperity and happiness; yet
 “ I *wait* for it, in full expectation of be-
 “ ing removed to a better state and life.
 “ Tho’ I can’t hope to have my condition
 “ changed for the better, by a return to
 “ this life, I expect, however, to have it
 “ mended by a translation to another. And
 “ I am willing to *wait* for this *change*, du-
 “ ring thy pleasure, tho I have no prospect
 “ of enjoying any pleasure myself in the
 “ mean time.”

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ALL the days of my appointed time: in the Hebrew it is, all the days of my warfare.^d And this is a proper notion of human life. This life is a *warfare*, in which we have various troubles, as well as temptations of other kinds to contend with: and 'tis, at least, as hard to bear the evils of life, as to resist the allurements of it. It seems *Job* was so close beset by the former, that he was weary of encount'ring them any longer, and would have been glad to have made a handsome retreat. And there are many that have wished, with him, to be hid from them, even tho' it were in a grave: nay, that have actually run to the grave as a hiding-place from those evils and adversities, which they wanted courage to face. And yet this has been construed, by some, to be an act of bravery and resolution; which plainly proceeds from the want of it, and has not been owing so much to a contempt of life, as to a fear of the evils of it. *Job* betrayed too much of this cowardice and pusillanimity, when he cried out so passionately, *O that thou would'st hide me in the grave!* But he recovered his courage in the next words, *All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.*

THE Septuagint Version renders the whole verse different from what it is in the *Hebrew*, or in our translation, and refers the former,

כל ימי צרתי.

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as well as the latter part of it, to a future state : *If a Man die, shall he live again; (or he shall live again) after he hath finished the days of his life? I will wait, till I live again*^a. But which way soever you take the *question* before the *text*, the *resolution* in the *text* will amount to much the same thing. For tho' the former be supposed to imply a despair of returning back to this life and state after death ; yet the latter is plainly founded on the hope; and full expectation of removing into another by dying. For if *Job* had looked on death as the period of his being, he would hardly have waited for its coming. His troubles would have quite tired his patience, and have provoked him to cut off his being, before it was took from him. As he chose *strangling, and death, rather than life*; nothing hindered, but he might, and wou'd have had his choice, had he had no prospect of living again after he so died. It was the expectation of another state and world only, that could prevail on one, who was made such an example of suffering and affliction, to shew such an example of patience under it, as to *wait* for the coming of death to release him from it.

IN the words thus introduced and explained, there are these three things observable :

^a Εαν γαρ αποθανη ανθρωπος. ζήσεται συντελεσας ημερας τε βίης αυτης υπομενω εως παλιν γενωμαι.

- I. *THE expectation Job had of dying.*
- II. *THE hope he had beyond death.*
- III. *THE temper of mind he was now in, and determined to maintain and cultivate with reference to it.*

I SHALL consider each of these in their order, and then *conclude with some practical reflections suitable to the subject, and the occasion.*

I. I BEGIN with the expectation of dying, which these words express. When *Job* asks the question, whether *man* shall *live* after death; he supposeth that *man* is a creature that shall *dye*. And when he resolves to *wait* till this *change* come, he takes it for granted that it will *come*. *Job's* resolution, how to live, goes on the supposition, that he must die. This is a sentence that hath past on all mankind, and the execution has been almost as general as the sentence; there having been but two only of the race of mortals, that have been exempted from mortality. And as these two persons were men of distinguished piety and virtue, so their translation to heaven, without dying, was upon an important and extraordinary occasion, *viz.* to give mankind a visible proof of a future state, at a time when the reason of mankind was so much sunk, that they were not likely to discover it themselves, and when it was not yet *brought to light* by any standing revelation from *God*. So that
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tho' *Enoch* and *Elias* were carried to heaven, without going by the way of death and the grave, we must, however, be content to be taken the common road, even to *walk thro'* the *dark valley of the shadow of death*, in our way to it. This is a journey indeed that we must take, whether heaven or hell be the end of it. We almost every day see one or another of our acquaintance and friends (and very often of our family or kindred) setting out on this awful journey before us; we bring them on their way, as far as the grave, and leave them in that dusty road, expecting to follow after them quickly. *The living know that they shall die*^a. This is a truth we are all forced to believe, an event we can none of us help expecting; tho', 'tis to be feared, too many of us strive to forget it, and would fain put it out of their thoughts. But, whether it be grateful to you to hear it or not, 'tis necessary you should be told of it sometimes; and upon such an occasion as this, you will allow me to remind you, that you are *mortal*. I am come with the very same message to every one of you, even tho' you are in health and strength, with which the *Prophet* was sent to *Hezekiah* on a sick bed, *viz.* to tell you, that you shall *die, and not live*^b. *Hezekiah wept sore*, when he was told this ungrateful truth; and yet, as little as you may

^a Ecclef. ix. 5.

^b Isai. xxxviii. 1.

be affected with hearing the sad prediction, I must tell you moreover, that 'tis a prediction that, in all probability, will be fulfilled much sooner on many of you, than it was on him.

HERE you live in a world, where you are surrounded with a thousand sensible objects, that strike your imaginations, and try to steal your hearts and affections. And 'tis probable, there are many of you that like your situation so well, that you don't care to change it. However, we should none of us forget that *here we have no continuing city*^a. We must all change our habitation shortly, and be content to go into a lesser one. It may be, there are some of you, that would be glad to have a house, that you can call your own, to dwell in; and I'll tell you of one that you may call your own in a little time, and that no one will dispute your title to, or be very fond of putting you out of possession of; but that is *the Grave*! As little consolation as this thought may give you, *Job* seems to have borrowed some support from it in his necessity. *If I wait, the grave is mine house*^b. Well, *all the days of my appointed time I will wait, till my change come*. Now *the grave*, you know, is *the house appointed for all living*^c. But, alas! that is a house you are willing to wait a great while for, and are not over-hasty to enter

^a Heb. xiii. 14.^b Job xvii. 13.^c Job xxx. 23.

upon.

upon. A man's situation in the world must be made very uneasy indeed to him, to make him prefer a lodging in the grave to it. We are apt to think, that an ill habitation, and most men look upon the day of their removal to it as an *evil day*; and because they think it an *evil day*, they don't love to think of it at all. They strive to keep it out of their thoughts, because their thoughts trouble them when ever it comes there.

THERE are many persons that are apt to boast of their family, that glory in their descent, and rate themselves by the worth of their ancestors. If there were any such in this assembly, I would say to them, of *corruption*, that it is their *father*; and of the *worm*, that it is their *mother*, and their *sister*^a. Earth is our common mother; we had, all of us, our original from the dust. Men and worms are but one mother's children. The brittleness of our make, and constitution; its frequent disorders, and gradual decay, shew whence we came, and whither we are tending; that *dust* we are, and *unto dust* we *shall return*^b. You may feel that your *habitation is in the dust*, by its tottering so easily, and sinking so fast; and infer from it, that 'twill be under the dust quickly. *Your fathers, where are they?* nay, your children, (may I not ask as to some of them?) *where are they?* We have

^a Job xvii. 14.

^b Gen. iii. 19.

most of us some pledges of ourselves in the grave : there is some part of us already turned to rottenness and dust : and this is an earnest and fore-runner of the dissolution of the whole. There is not a grave indeed opens its mouth before us, but what reads us a lesson of our frailty, and whispers in our ears that we are mortal. Nay, this is an inscription that you may read over those graves, that are not honour'd with any other. 'Tis written in as legible and lasting characters in the dust, as others are on brass or marble. But I would not dwell too long on this mournful reflection. There is no need for me to multiply words, when graves multiply so fast, and the silent dust is able to speak. We have an awful instance of mortality now in our thoughts, that is enough to teach us all, *how frail we are*. We have lately seen a person carried to her grave, and laid with her fathers, whose age and constitution seem'd to promise a much longer life, (if youth and health could promise so uncertain a thing,) and whose usefulness in the church, and the world, would have made that life highly desirable to her friends, if it had but been agreeable to her *Maker*. Neither the vigour of her age, nor the strength and firmness of her constitution, nor (which is more than all) the fervour and importunity of prayer, no not of her own prayers ! could protect her from the arrest of death, or save her out of
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the hands of the grave. Alas! how little resistance is *man*, at his *best estate*, able to make, when the last enemy comes to assault him! Surely every *man walketh in a vain shew*^c! He just steps forth into life, walks a-cross the stage, and *appears for a little while*, and then, all of a sudden, *vanisheth away*, and is seen no more! Just shews himself to the world, and presently the curtain of death is drawn around him, and the *vain show* is over! But let us turn our thoughts to a more pleasing subject, and relieve our minds under the sad apprehensions of death, by considering the hopes we have beyond it; which is what *Job* has recourse to in my text, for support under the evils of his life; and is the

II^d. Thing I proposed to consider. *Job* considers death as a *change*; a change of this world for another; and, in his own case, a changing it for a better. 'Twas in this view that he did, and in this view only that he would, *wait* for it; as I have already observed. When he opposeth the *hope* of a tree's *sprouting again after it is cut down*, to that of man's *rising after he dies*, ver. 7—10, he does not mean, that there is less hope of man's recovering his life, than of a tree's sending forth *buds and branches*; but only, that he will not spring up so soon.

^c Psalm xxxix. 6.

And

And so he explains himself in the next comparison: *As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down, and riseth not, till the heavens be no more*, ver. 11, 12. — Thus again, when he says, *man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?* ver. 10. he does not, he cannot surely, mean that he is no where? but only, that he is no where to be met with in this world; that *the place that formerly knew him, knows him no more*. His body indeed is not far to seek, his grave, his tomb-stone will tell *where* that is. And, if there were no other part belonged to him, we should not be any farther to seek for the man. If the whole man falls under the stroke of death, we know *where* to find him again. But this question supposeth there is a part belongs to him, which the grave doth not hold, and cannot produce: a principal part, that is no *where* to be seen, or found, in this world. — And so, when he asks again, (in the verse to which my text belongs) *if a man die shall he live again?* the meaning is not, that he shall live no *where* again; but that he shall not *live again* this animal probationary life. These are not the queries of an Atheist, or a Sadducee; but of one, who believ'd that *God is, and is the rewarder of them that seek him. The resurrection, and the life everlasting*, were as much articles of Job's creed, as they are of ours. So he tells

tells us himself^d: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and tho, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.* A passage which, tho' it came from an *old testament* saint, speaks the language of the *new* so well, that I don't see how a christian could express his hope of a resurrection in stronger and clearer words. And they who understand it to mean, his expectation of a deliverance by a change of his outward circumstances in this world, in my opinion, do not only rob it of the best part of its meaning, but take away all its propriety. It does not appear indeed, from any part of his story, that he foresaw this, (but the contrary seems evident, from several passages;) or, if he had foreseen it, he would hardly have chose such words to foretel it; words so grand and lofty, that they naturally raise our thoughts above so low an event, and make us overlook their own meaning. But whether *Job* was so clear in the doctrine of a *resurrection*, as these words intimate; and many other hints, scattered up and down thro' his history, would lead us to think; 'tis plain, from my text alone, that he believed a future state. For he speaks of death as a change; a change he hoped to be a gainer by; nay, which he hoped to gain something

^d Chap. xix. 25, 26.

by that his present waiting was needful to secure, and that would pay him well for it.

DEATH is not then the destruction of our being ; but only a changing our habitation. We don't drop our whole being, when the body falls under the stroke of death. There is a nobler part within us, that stands out of the view of sense, and out of the reach of death : a soul, that will survive our funerals, and never *see corruption* ! And our religion will not suffer us to look on the body itself as lost, when it drops off the soul, and moulders back to its original *dust* ; but teacheth us to consider it as only *fallen asleep* in death, and laid up in safe custody in the grave : so that we don't put it off, as a worn out garment, that is never to come on again ; but only lay it aside for a time ; and with the pleasing expectation too of having it altered, and made fitter for the soul, against that day, when it is to be put on and worn again. And as we do not drop our whole being, nor lose any part of it, when we die ; so neither do we go away into silence, and perpetual darkness and oblivion, when we go off the stage of this world. Death is a path that leads to another world, a door that opens into a new state of life and existence. It brings us, 'tis true, to the end of our journey ; but it is not itself the end of it. No, *the wicked man is driven away*
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in his wickedness, farther than this; *and the righteous hath hope* beyond it. Life would be but a wearisom journey, if the grave were our journey's end : a journey that no man, if he had known before-hand whether he was going, would have been willing to set out on ; and that many persons would wish themselves at the end of, before they had travelled half the way to it. If we were not to *live again*, we should be at an utter loss to guess at any good reason for our living at all. And be ready to look on ourselves as the most idle and superfluous race of beings in the creation ; that were formed without design, and have no good end to propose to ourselves in living. What account could be given of the wisdom, or goodness of the *great Author* of our beings, in raising such a creature as man, furnishing him with the superior faculties of reason and understanding ; if this world be the only stage he is to appear on, and this life the whole duration of his being ? Whence is it that we have such enlarged powers, and yet are shut up within so narrow a compass of time to use, and improve them ? are made capable of such high advances in knowledge and goodness, and yet confined and held in from reaching after them, and stopped in our progress as soon almost as we set out ?

LET us consider a little, *what end could be answer'd by our existence, on the suppo-*
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sition that we were made only for this world; and what use our understanding would be of to us.

HAS God given us reason and understanding, only to enable us to ask a few idle questions: *What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewith shall I be clothed?* To plod and provide for this animal life, which we live here in common with the brutes? Is this all the use a soul is of to us; to purvey for the body, and be a nurse to the animal part of our composition? And is this the reward it is to have, after it has waited on the body to a grave; to lie down there with it, and be no more? We should have little room to boast of the dignity of our natures, if our natures were of so short a continuance: little reason to be proud of being distinguished from the beasts, while we live, if there is to be no difference between us and them, when we come to die? especially considering, that we know not but *to-morrow we die.* *If in this life only we have hope,* good men would not only, many of them, be *of all men most miserable*; but mankind in general would, in some respects, be more so than *the beasts that perish.* For, *Behold the fowls of the air,* as you are directed ^a, *they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them.* What shall we conclude

^a Matt. vi. 26.

from hence? that we *are much better than they?* nay rather, are we not *much* worse, if we have reason given us, only to give us the trouble of providing those things for ourselves, which the providence of *God* takes care to set before them? And has not *God*, in making us *wiser than the fowls of the air*, made our condition, on this account, so much the worse? At least, in giving us *more understanding than the beasts of the field*, he has given us nothing. If all the use of our reason be to provide for the body; 'tis manifestly no advantage to us, and we might have done altogether as well without it.

'Tis true, we may, by the help of our reason, be able to enquire out who, and *where is God our maker*; to understand the notices he has given us of his existence, to contemplate the perfections of his nature, and the beauty and harmony of his works. And this would be, no doubt, a most entertaining prospect, if we could but shut ourselves out of it, and forget that we are one part of his workmanship. But alas! the sad thoughts of the annihilation and utter extinction of our own beings, especially the thought of it as near at hand, would be apt to cast a dark gloom on every other being around us. If we knew we were made only for this world, I doubt, we should hardly think it worth our while to enquire after our maker. And it would be but a poor pleasure

pleasure to us, to survey the beauties of the creation, when we could not help thinking at the same time, that after we have seen them for a little while, we must shut our eyes for ever on them, and depart into a land of perpetual darkness and forgetfulness. Or if the pleasures, that would arise from the proper use of our reason and understanding, during such a short and scanty term of existence as is supposed, were never so great ; yet the pain and uneasiness, which it would unavoidably create us, I am apt to think, would more than weigh it down. For, besides the uneasiness that would arise from the near prospect of the end of life, we should meet with frequent interruptions in the enjoyments of it, from many other uneasy reflections with which it would often disturb us, and the unwelcom restraints it would lay upon us.

IN short, if we were made only for this world, we were made to lead an animal or a rational life here. *If we had been made only to live an animal life,* 'tis probable we should have been left to follow the bias of animal inclination, as we see other animals are. We should not have had reason given us, to put us to the trouble of providing what we want, and the pain of being denied many things that we crave : to create uneasy and unnecessary reflections on what is past, and fill us with melancholy foreboding apprehensions of what is to come : but have
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been left to range loose and unrestrained, wherever our inclinations led us, and have had our views confined within as narrow bounds as our lives. On the other hand, *if we had been designed for a rational life*, 'tis hardly to be supposed we should have been allowed so short a one, or that that short one would have been made so uneasy to us as it is. As, on the former supposition, we should not have had reason to check our inclinations; so, on this, we should not have had inclinations that war against our reason: but our reason would, in all probability, have had more room, and larger scope to exercise and improve itself, and have met with less disturbance and interruption. Whereas, as it is, if God has created us only for this world, which soever was his design in making us, he hath made us so as to frustrate and disappoint it. And we should have some reason to expostulate with our Maker in the words of the Psalmist^b: *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*

Nay, if God made man only for this world, it will follow, not only that he hath made him *in vain*; but also that he hath made him on purpose to make him miserable. For, as he is a reasonable creature, he cannot but earnestly desire the continuance of his *being*, and cannot help being

^b Psal. lxxxix. 47.

filled with an inward dread and horror, at the thought of coming to the end of it, and that so very soon too ! and falling into nothing. This is a principle that is planted in our nature, and that grows up with us, and which we can no more get rid of, than we can part with our being itself. This strong desire therefore, this vehement ardour of the soul after immortality, which is so essential to our nature, is to be father'd on the author of our nature, and must have been purposely planted in it by that hand that formed and fashioned it. And to suppose that *God* hath planted it in our nature, without any intention to gratify it, is to suppose that he hath put it there on purpose to torment us, and to be a perpetual thorn in our hearts. — Besides, the constitution of the human nature is such, that it not only leads us to desire the continuance of our beings, but also to cherish the hope that it shall not come to an end. And if we can believe that *God* designs to cut it off notwithstanding, we must think that he has contrived our nature thus, not only to vex and torment us, but to cheat and delude us too. And consequently that neither goodness, nor truth are to be found in him. The truth is, if there be no future state, reason, that points it out to us, is *a vanity* ; our inclinations, that reach after it, are *a vexation* ; the one is no advantage to us, and the other is an affliction and a torment,

torment, and we shou'd have room to complain of our *Maker* for both.

AND as our reason is a *vanity*, and a *vexation of spirit*, on the supposition we have no other world to look for but this; so *religion must come under the same character too*. Wicked men would then have some face for saying, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him^c?* As we shou'd have no very considerable advantage above the beasts by the use of reason, so we shou'd, I doubt, be but little better than wicked men by the practice of religion; nay, the best of men wou'd, many of them, be in the worst condition, and *of all men the most miserable^d*.

It is too obvious, and apparent, to be denied, or doubted of, that how differently soever God may regard the good, and the wicked, yet he doth not in fact make any considerable difference between them in the conduct of his providence at present; not such as is sufficient to shew his approbation of the one, and his displeasure with the other; so as to encourage his faithful servants, amidst all the difficulties that do, and the inconveniences may, attend a life of strict virtue and piety; and to deter and punish those that disobey him: but deals out his favours with so equal a hand, that *no man knoweth love or hatred by all that is before them^e*. The word of

^c Job xxi. 15.

^d 1 Cor. xv. 19.

^e Eccles. ix. 1.

God himself hath put an objection in the mouths of good men against *Him*, if they have no hope of changing this world for a better. For here it grants, that *all things come alike to all ; that there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked* ^f. And this is such a difficulty in the scheme of Providence, as can never be solved, without having recourse to the supposition, and belief of a future state : such as wou'd be a great discouragement to all piety and virtue, and tempt men to throw off the restraints of religion. For if *God* does not regard the conduct of mankind, what cou'd induce them to regard *His* command? What prevailing motive wou'd there be to obedience, if the hope of the divine favour was wanting to encourage men to it? If *God* really approv'd of them that serve him, and was displeased with such as despise and neglect him, there can be no doubt but *He* would, some way or other, shew his approbation of the one, and his dislike of the other ; and, as they carry it so differently toward him, that *He* would make an equal and proportionable difference between them in *His* dispensations. Since therefore *God* does not make any such visible distinction between them in the present state, and consequently, if there be no future state, *He* never will do it ; but the wicked, many of them,

^f Eccles. ix. 2.

fare better at present than the good, and will all come off as well in the issue of things, the inference is unavoidable, that religion is not in favour with him, nor vice and wickedness His abhorrence. And, if religion is not in favour with God, what is there to recommend it to men? Upon this supposition, all religion must be a *vain thing*, excepting only that of the *Epicure*: *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.*

IF therefore God has not *made all men in vain*, much less made them on purpose to make them miserable; if wisdom and goodness had any hand in our creation, and are at all concerned in the government of the world; if reason be of any use to us, and religion be at all in favour with God; we cannot help inferring, that we were not, we could not be, made for this world only; but are principally designed for another: and consequently, that when we die we don't drop our being, but only change our habitation. And for the proof of this grand and important principle, we have more witnesses than one to call. *God hath spoken* this to us *once, yea twice*, that we may the more regard it. This is the language not only of our own minds, but of the Spirit of God too. The scriptures every where teach us to look on death, as a passage out of one world into another; as a changing our habitation, and our condition too. It represents *this world*, as a dressing-room to another; a

place, where we are sent to make ready for immortality, and put on a clothing, that is fit for us to appear before our maker in: and it assures us, that we shall be disposed of in the future state, according to our behaviour in this. That we shall be either adjudged to eternal, and inconceivable happiness, on the one hand, or to remediless misery, on the other. And it represents this impartial judgment as the awful consequent of death. *It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment* ^s. In this view, the *exchange* we make by dying appears to be the greatest, and most solemn, we can ever make. For 'tis not only changing one world for another, (a world we know, and have tried already, and perhaps have contracted too great a fondness for, for an unknown, untried state of being!) but 'tis changing for ever. 'Tis removing to a state, and world, that we can never change again; and, if we are prepared for a removal to it, that we shall never wish to change. A good man is *born* from above; heaven is his native country, and dying, to him, is only going home. And 'tis no wonder to find him waiting to set out on so desirable a journey. Which leads me,

III. To consider the temper of mind, with reference to death, which *Job* was now in,

^s Heb. ix. 27.

and

and which he, in my text, expresseth his resolution to maintain and cultivate: *I will wait, till my change come.* As he expected to *change* this world for a better, so he was willing to make the advantageous exchange, as soon as his Maker pleased. However, tho' the evils he suffered in this world, and the hopes he had in another, must make death a welcome messenger to him, when it came; yet he durst not call for it, before it was sent. *No, says he, I will wait till my change come.*

Now this implies, that he was already prepared for this awful *change*. *Waiting* for death supposeth a readiness to meet it, when it comes. *Job* had done the work of life, before he was called out to conflict with the evils and adversities of it; and had those graces and virtues formed in him, that qualified him for suffering, and dying too. And, being prepared for a happiness in another life, he expected to find it; and was well assured that *He*, who had framed his soul for it, would not fail to bestow it on him.

It implies farther, a rational esteem for that future state of happiness, he had in his view, and a comparative contempt of this. And consequently, that he preferr'd a departure out of the world, to a longer stay in it. But yet,

THAT he was resigned to the disposal of providence, and entirely left it to infinite wisdom

wisdom to determine, what afflictions to exercise him with farther in life, and when to give him a discharge by death. And,

Lastly, THAT he lived in expectation of dying, and would endeavour to put his soul into a greater readiness for that *change*, he expected by it.

SUCH a temper of mind as this, with reference to death, is peculiar to a good man, and generally prevails most in those, whose lives are in some measure imbitter'd by severe, or long trials. In such a situation as this, especially, the good man *waits* to die. He looks for the coming of death as a child, that has been long absent from his father's house, and has met with ill usage abroad, doth for the coming of the messenger, that is sent to fetch him home: not with an impatient fretfulness indeed under the evils, and inconveniences he suffers in the mean time; not murmuring at his father's delay, nor rashly setting out before he is sent for; but willing to depart, and yet content to tarry during his father's pleasure.

I DON'T say that *Job* always kept this temper in the view of *death*; we find him very differently affected toward it, in other passages of his book. He seems more than once to be weary of life, and out of disgust at the condition that was allotted him, to call in haste for death. As *Jonah* did twice in a passion: first, at God's stopping the execu-
tion

tion of his threatening against the *Ninevites*; and, after that, on the *withering* of the *gourd*. Herein his example is not for our imitation, but for our caution.

AND tho', in my text, he seems to have come to a better temper, and expresseth himself in words that become the mouth of every good man, yet 'tis not every good man, that can come up to the full meaning of them. *Hezekiah wept sore*, when he was told he must *die*; and there are many good men, that cannot so entirely overcome the fear of death, or so fully satisfy themselves as to their state after death, as to be perfectly free to die. It is not every christian that can take death by the cold hand, and give it a hearty welcome. And, I believe I may add, there is no one that is always in a frame to do it.

BUT this waiting for death, as it implies a rational preference of the future state to this, frequent and serious fore-thoughts of dying, and an habitual care, and constant endeavour, to be in a readiness for it; patience under the evils of life, and a resignation to the will of God, as to the time of their death, enters into the character, and belongs to the temper of every good man.

THE wicked man indeed is, for the most part, *driven away in his wickedness*, amidst the insupportable horrors of a guilty mind, the terrors of an angry God, and the

the dread of an opening grave, and *everlasting burnings*. But as the righteous *hath hope in his death*, so he hath learned to resign life. His heart is already loosened, in a great measure, from the world, and the things of it; so that there is no need of any great violence to tear it asunder. And his hopes are so fastened to the other world, that he is easily drawn thither himself. In dying they both agree; but in the manner of dying they generally differ as wide, as in the manner of living. *The one goes a volunteer to this last warfare, the other is pressed*. Whatever advantage a wicked man may be imagined to have in living, yet in dying every one must see who has the better. Those that can't be reconciled to the thoughts of living like the good man, cannot help wishing to die as he does, and that *their latter end may be like his*. A guilty conscience is a companion that no one cares for, when he is going to meet death, how easy soever he might make himself in its company before. This would be fighting two enemies at a time, when a man is not in a condition to encounter one. Alas! *where is the hope, where the heart of the hypocrite, when God shall call for his soul? What fruit has he in those things, at the remembrance of which he is now ashamed?* now! when he needs a more than usual courage, and confidence to support him. But *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that*
man

man is peace^b. And that shews the wisdom of his conduct before. Here's the excellence of religion! here's the advantage of a good life, that it will give peace when a man comes *to die*, and bring in comfort when all other consolation stands afar off. Religion, and a good conscience are things that will stay with a man to the last, and afford him help in the greatest extremity. If you would shew a man the prudence, and wisdom of being religious, carry him to a christian on a death-bed, that leaves the world with this *testimony* of his *conscience*, that *in simplicity and godly sincerity he hath had his conversation in it*. There you may shew him such proof of it, as will supply the place of a thousand arguments. Such a sight as this (as I have been well informed) drew tears once from the eyes of a deist, and extorted this confession along with them, (which he spoke in the hearing of several persons present) "It is a glorious thing to be a christian." I cannot illustrate this better, than by representing the behaviour of our deceased friend in the near approach, and under the apprehensions, of her dissolution. Indeed I am restrained from saying all that I could say, and that I should have thought profitable to you to hear, concerning her, by her own dying request. It was her inclination,

^c Psalm xxxvii. 37.

as it had been her honour'd father's before her, to pass thro' the world, and go out of it, with as little noise and bustle as possible. I will not therefore trespass so far on her temper, as well as desire, as to make her too publick to the world, now she is gone out of it; who affected so much to be retired from it, while she was in it. Only some of those things, which I heard from her own mouth on a death-bed, I'll venture to repeat in your hearing.

IT pleased God to impress her, in her early days, with a sense of religion, by means of a very particular providence toward some others, to whom she stood nearly related; which she remembered, and often recollected with great thankfulness ever after. At the age of seventeen years she renewed that dedication of herself to the service of God in publick, at the table of the Lord, which she had made before in private. And she continued in communion with this church, from that time to the day of her death; making conscience of attending on the publick ordinances of God with it, as often as the stated opportunities for it on the Lord's-day returned, or even occasional ones offered on other days: and had not learn'd the art of satisfying herself in the neglect of them, by the help of those little and trivial excuses which too many take up. And here, I am perswaded, you will think it but a due expression of the respect, and gratitude this church owes to her memory,

mory, for me to add, that as *she* had countenanced the publick worship of God in this place, by her constant presence at it, and liberal contributions to it, while *she* lived; so *she* has left us a genercus proof of her concern for the continuance, and support of it after her death.

H E R religion was not a sunday's wear only, but the daily dress of her soul; what *she* appeared in in her own house, as well as in the house of God. And yet *she* looked on the christian life to be in a great measure a hidden life, and took care that hers shou'd be so; and that God and her own conscience, that knew her better than all others, shou'd know better things of her too. *She* did not think, that religion lies in being of this, or the other opinion about the controverted doctrines of it, or falling in with one or, another party of christians; but, as *she* expressed herself in the words of the prophet, in doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God¹. And her conscience bore her witness, on a death-bed, that *she* had endeavoured thus to walk with God, and that her practice had been, in some good measure, agreeable to the profession *she* made of religion, and the notion *she* had of it.

S H E did not affect the grandeur, or the gaieties of life, nor allow herself all the innocent plea-

¹ Mic, vi. 8.

tures, which her rank and station in the world might have intitled her to : but chose rather to deny herself many lawful entertainments, than to run the risque of being drawn into any that were not so. She was not fond of a large acquaintance, nor of much company. Her chief desire was to acquaint herself with God, as having enjoyed more peace and pleasure in his company, than in any other. Her closet can witness to the morning, and evening visits she constantly paid him, and to the many pleasant hours conversation she has had with him. And yet she knew how to be agreeable in other company too.

IN a word, she knew how to enjoy life, while God was pleas'd to continue it to her, and was prepared to resign it too, whenever He shou'd call for it. And tho she had, as she said, many temptations to wish for a longer stay in the world, yet as it pleas'd God to deny it her, she was not displeas'd, but cheerfully submitted to His will. The consciousness of her integrity toward God, and her trust in the mediation of her Saviour with him, yielded her peace and pleasure in the prospect of dying. As she had entrusted her soul, and her eternal concerns in his hands, so she knew in whom she had believed, and was perswaded that he was able to keep what she had committed to him against that day. O, said she, were my great work now to be done, what a dreadful case shou'd I be in. I find, I cannot

not tell how to attend to any little worldly affair, that calls upon me, my illness so discomposes me ! What a condition shou'd I have been in then, had I had the affairs of another world now to be settled ? But, I bless God, that enabled me to *set my house in order*, and my soul too, while I was capable of doing it. I have nothing to disturb or make me uneasy, either as to my concerns in this world, or my interest in another. I don't desire you shou'd pray for my life, but only that my faith may not fail me, till that does, nor my patience be tired ; but I may hold out to the end. *In this happy frame, and with these reflections and hopes, did this excellent person view the approach of death, seeming rather to fear, she shou'd want patience to wait its slow, and gradual approach, than courage to meet it ; but yet resolving with Job, in the strength of divine grace, that she wou'd wait all the days of her appointed time, till her change should come. And because these words, were so expressive of her faith, and hope, and patience in the apprehensions of death, she desired they might be made use of to assist and strengthen yours against it.*

AND this is the general lesson, which *both the text, and the providence* that occasion'd my discoursing on it, teach us. The *change Job* looked for is what we have the same reason, every one of us, to expect. We can no more doubt whether we shall
die,

die, than whether our deceased friend is dead. Let us learn to look on death as a thing near at hand, and not always view it at a distance ; *all the days of our appointed time* remembring there is a last day allotted us, and that the last and the first may not be so far asunder, as we are ready to place them. And if we do look on the *day of our death* to be an *evil day*, let us not however put *it far from us*, because that will be the way to put us behind-hand in our preparation for it, and so make it an *evil day* indeed to us. Whereas by bringing it nearer to ourselves, and conversing more frequently and familiarly with it, we shall learn to alter our notions of it ; in proportion as we grow better prepared for it, we shall be better reconciled to it ; and when once we can look upon ourselves as actually ready to die, we shall begin to look on the *day of our death* as better than *the day of our birth*.

BUT I wou'd speak to the surviving relations of the deceas'd, before I come to make the application to others. The providence, that hath brought you hither, speaks to *you* in particular, and 'tis fit the pulpit shou'd. Here is an awful lesson for you to learn, that 'tis to be hoped you cannot presently forget. A lesson of human frailty, of the uncertainty of life, and the utter vanity of all worldly good ! Alas *what*

is your life? It is even a vapour, that *appeareth* for a little time, and then *vanisheth away*^k. The life of your departed relative was just such a vapour as this; and your lives are all vapours too. There's one vapour, that you had reason to expect wou'd have lasted till most of yours disappear'd, *vanished away* before any of them. Does not this loudly admonish you, how soon the rest may be put out? Who that remembers his life is a vapour, durst promise himself, that it will *appear* all night? And if life itself is but a vapour, the enjoyments of it are but a bubble. What are large estates, pompous edifices, and the like? but so many great vapours! For when your life *vanisheth away*, all these *vanish* with them, as to you. Be perswaded to look out after a happiness, that does not depend upon a vapour, and prepare for that life, that won't *vanish away*. Let the providence that tells you, you have *here no continuing city*, teach you to *seek one to come*. And since you must change this world for *another*, make sure of it in time, that you do change it for *a better*. You may be called to make the awful exchange sooner than you expect; and the *youngest* of you may be called upon first. Your having come but lately into this world

^k Jam. iv. 14.

is no excuse from going into another. If you have not reach'd as yet to the age of your deceas'd friend and relation, remember withal that *you may never do it*. You may have even fewer days *appointed you*, than were allotted *her*. Take care, I beseech you, that as they are already call'd a *tale* for their shortness, you don't make them a *tale* by the vanities, and follies you act in them. And, that you may not, keep alive the thoughts of your great change. Let the changes of others raise in you a more affecting sense, and habitual expectation of your own. You have now seen a kindred-family, that, but a very few years ago, bid fair for multiplying into various branches, dissolved and broke up; and have, many of you, accompanied *father*, and *children* successively to their grave. Shou'd not this sensibly teach you how near you are akin to dust, and corruption? O that, as by one part of you you are thus allied to the *grave*, you may be but as near akin to *heaven* by the other! But I am sensible I have trespass'd too far on your time, (and I fear on your patience,) already; and therefore I forbear enlarging farther. Let me only intreat you to

HEAR the conclusion of the whole matter, in two or three practical reflections on what has been said.

I. IF we must all *die*, and *change worlds*; how strange and unaccountable is the conduct of most men, in *living* as they do in the mean time? 'Tis too obvious to observe, that the greatest part of mankind *live* now, as if they were never to *live again*. They live wholly for the sake of life, and all their care and contrivance is, how to make this world as agreeable an habitation as they can. In a word, they take as much thought for this life, as tho' it were never to come to an *end*; and as little for the other, as if it were never to *begin*. And if this world were really their only dwelling, and they had no prospect of ever removing to another; their fondness for it wou'd not be unaccountable, nor quite so excessive. If all our inheritance lay on this side the grave, and there were no portion of existence in reserve for us beyond it, 'twou'd no doubt be every one's wisest way to make the best of what he has already in his hands, as he wou'd have nothing further then to hope for. But how absurd and preposterous a thing is it, to lay out all our care upon a momentary life, when we have eternal ages to contrive and lay up for? To employ all our time in providing for a body, that will itself, after all we have bestowed upon it, become provision for worms in a few days; when we have immortal souls to take care of, that will never know what death, or corruption mean? Ah! where is the wisdom

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dom

dom of the miser? Where is the contrivance of the epicure now? 'Tis certainly a foolish, and a fatal conduct to live the life of a brute, unless they were sure to die his death; and that their *last end* shou'd be *like* that of the *beasts that perish*.

2. A MAN that lives as he ought to do, has no good reason to be afraid to die. If indeed we were to come to the end of our being, when we draw to the conclusion of this life; if annihilation and utter destruction awaited us at the end of our journey; we might well dread the thought of ever coming to it. It wou'd be no wonder to see a man shiver at the apprehension of lying down in a cold and silent grave, if he had no hope of ever rising out of it. In a word, if we were to have nothing in exchange for this life, 'tis not to be expected that we shou'd be very fond of resigning it. But on the other hand, if we have a firm hope of living again in another, and a better world, there can be no tolerable reason assign'd, why we shou'd betray such an eager desire of living always in this. We find *Job* quite otherwise affected toward it, in a passage I have quoted already. He was not for *living always* amidst so much *vanity*, and emptiness, as he found here. And one wou'd think no man shou'd be desirous of perpetuating such a life, as 'tis certain no good man can be. And tho' *death* carries in it something terrible to nature, and we are apt

apt to start at the first sight of it ; yet grace knows how to calm the mind of a christian, and tame that *monster*, so that it shall not affright nor terrify him. The good man considers there is no way for him to get to the possession of his chief hopes but by dying ; and thus the *monster death* is changed into a *kind messenger*, and he ventures to open his door to it without fear or dread.

3. If death be a *change* ; this should put us all on enquiring, what *change* it will prove to us. I am, I find, shortly to *change* one world for another ; but, O my soul ! tell me, I beseech thee, what exchange am I going to make ? I am told, I am to *live again* ; but where, and how am I to *live* ? In what state, in what world is my future lot of life cast ? I know I am removing hence ; but whither, O whither ! am I going ? To what place am I thus hastening ? Am I travelling to heaven, or hell ? which of these distant, vastly distant ! abodes is like to be my habitation ? And that we may be able to form a probable judgment concerning this important matter ; let us examine farther, which of them the habitual temper, and disposition of our minds is most suited to ? Is it calculated for heaven, or for hell ? Is there any *change* passed on our hearts ? or does that, which was once *filthy*, remain *filthy still* ? Am I made a *partaker of a*

*divine nature, and so made meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light ? and have I escaped the pollutions that are in the world, thro' lust ? that unfit the soul for the divine presence, and render it incapable of that happiness that ariseth from it. Do I often think of that life I am to enter upon, when I resign this ; or does this momentary state take up all my thoughts, and engross my whole attention ? Does the body or the soul, time or eternity stand uppermost in my heart, and foremost in my thoughts ? I don't know but *this night my soul may be required of me.* Have I committed it into the hand of one, who is able to keep what is committed to him ? or, has Satan the custody, and the world the command of it ? and does it not lie buried amidst the rubbish of worldly cares, or wallowing in the *mire* of sensual pleasures ? By putting such serious questions as these to ourselves, and debating them with our own consciences, we shall soon see how we stand toward the future world, and what is like to be our portion in it. And,*

4. *Lastly*, SINCE we are to change worlds, let us all be more solicitous to have our souls prepared for this awful *change* ; that we may live better than we do now, when we come to *live again.* *Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward,* when he comes into this world ; let us take care
left

lest when we go into another, we shou'd be *born* to greater sorrows, and more lasting ones. Here we live in a wilderness of men and beasts; let us take care that, when we go hence, we do not remove into the region of devils, and damned spirits. 'Twill be dreadful to change this world for a worse, and from *a vale of tears*, to pass into *a lake of fire*. Let us therefore live so, as that we may be assured our condition will be better'd by dying. And that we may change worlds to advantage; let us labour after a *change* in our natures: *except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*¹. Pray to the *Father of spirits*, to form your spirits a-new. And *give all diligence* to cultivate those graces, that will render you *like him*, and consequently fit to *appear* before him.

ENDEAVOUR to have your *peace* made with *God*, by flying to the *blood of Jesus*, and putting yourselves under the protection of the *gospel* covenant.

AND take care to keep conscience easy, and on your side, by an uniform and constant care to please *God*, and approve yourselves to him.

FREQUENTLY examine your course, and conduct, in the view of death and judgment; and resolve never to venture into that parth, in which your conscience

¹ John iii. 3, 5

(46)

tell you, you should be afraid to meet the one, and be called to the other.

KEEP yourselves unspotted from the world, and labour after a greater abstraction from the body. And,

Finally, LET your conversation be oftner in that world, from which you look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change your vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.



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